

Overview of the Atlantic Ecology Division's (AED) Contaminated Sediment Program in Support of EPA's Goal 3 (formerly Goal 5)

William G. Nelson
Research Physiologist
ORD/NHEERL/AED
(401) 782-3053
nelson.william@epa.gov

Authors: William G. Nelson and Barbara J. Bergen

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EPA's mission is to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment—air, water, and land—upon which life depends. Sediments are an integral component of aquatic ecosystems providing a habitat for many aquatic organisms. Chemicals released to surface waters from industrial and municipal discharges, atmospheric deposition, and polluted runoff from urban and agricultural areas can accumulate in sediment to environmentally harmful levels. In 1997, the National Sediment Quality Survey (U.S. EPA 1997) identified potential sediment contamination in all regions and states. Currently, there are over 2,800 fish consumption advisories in the U.S., and these are often traced to sediment contamination. In addition, there are 340 Superfund sites that have at least a partial sediment component. For these reasons, EPA supports both technical assistance and research related to the ecological effects and remediation of contaminated sediment. To provide scientific support for EPA's goal of Land Preservation and Restoration, ORD has developed a Multi-Year Plan for Contaminated Sites Research. A major long-term goal in this plan is focused on providing guidance for decision making at contaminated sediment sites. AED research studies and technical assistance provided in New Bedford Harbor, MA, and elsewhere have provided the foundation for future OSWER decisions. In addition, summaries of AED's other activities to support the NHEERL Multi-Year Implementation Plan are provided.